



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Dear HIV Prevention Partner:

An article in the March 27, 1998 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* introduces PHS recommendations that will allow clients to receive the results of rapid HIV tests on the day of testing. Persons whose rapid HIV test results are negative can be given a definitive negative result without a return visit. Persons whose HIV rapid tests are repeatedly reactive can be counseled about the likelihood of their HIV infection but must return to receive a confirmed test result after supplemental HIV testing. Experience indicates that providing clients with rapid HIV test results increases the number of persons who learn their HIV status and substantially reduces the outreach efforts necessary to locate and counsel the persons who do not return to learn they have tested positive for HIV. When additional rapid HIV tests become available and have been evaluated, the use of combinations of two different rapid HIV tests may allow same-day confirmation of reactive test results.

The change in PHS policy will allow HIV prevention programs to consider offering rapid HIV tests as part of their routine services. Currently, one rapid HIV test licensed by the Food and Drug Administration is commercially available, and other second-generation rapid tests are expected during the next several years.

Incorporating rapid HIV tests into counseling and testing activities will require modifications both in clinic procedures and prevention counseling. These procedures are likely to continue to evolve as other HIV testing technologies are introduced. To date, only a few public health clinics in the United States have used rapid HIV tests. We are pleased to provide you with a packet of scientific articles, a fact sheet, question and answers, and issues papers on rapid HIV tests. In addition, CDC will continue working with our partners to develop comprehensive guidance on implementation, counseling, and referral as programs incorporate rapid HIV tests into their HIV prevention services.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please contact your CDC project officer or one of us for further information.

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Attachments

cc: Helene Gayle MD, MPH